

CREATED EQUAL: AMERICA'S CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE

The Abolitionists ❖ Slavery by Another Name ❖ The Loving Story ❖ Freedom Riders

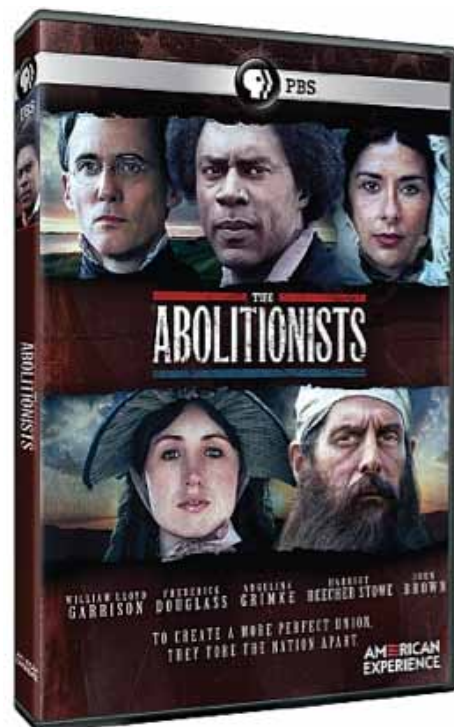
2. Overview of Films

The Abolitionists

(2013, 180 minutes)

Written, produced and directed by Rob Rapley. Edited by John Chimples & Al Jernon Tunsh. Cinematography by Tim Cragg. Narrated by Oliver Platt. Music by Tim Phillips. Executive Producer Sharon Grimberg. *American Experience* is a production of WGBH Boston. Senior Producer Sharon Grimberg. Executive Producer Mark Samels.

The Abolitionists vividly brings to life the struggles of the men and women who led the battle to end slavery. Through innovative use of reenactments, this three-episode series puts a face on the anti-slavery movement—or rather, five faces: William Lloyd Garrison, impassioned New England newspaper editor; Frederick Douglass, former slave, author, and activist; Angelina Grimké, daughter of a rich South Carolina slaveholder; Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the enormously influential *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; and John Brown, ultimately executed for his armed seizure of the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry. The film's release in 2013 also marked the 150th anniversary year of the Emancipation Proclamation.



Historical Background

Beginning in the 1830s, several religious, social, and political reform movements swept through the United States. Among the men and women leading these reforms were abolitionists who fought to end slavery, an institution they believed to be incompatible with the founding principles of the nation. Animated by religious convictions and faith in progress, early white and black abolitionists hoped that moral persuasion would convince slaveholders to free slaves voluntarily. To this end, they promoted the establishment of anti-slavery societies and engaged in a massive print campaign to distribute broadsides and pamphlets across the nation. By the 1840s, convinced that moral persuasion would not end slavery, they turned to concerted political action. Abolitionists argued that slavery was a political and an economic as well as a moral dilemma for the nation as the institution repudiated the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

In the decade preceding the Civil War for many in the North, abolitionists had successfully fused their vision of a moral nation with a political ideal of progress based on a free-labor economy. When the United States plunged into civil war, most Americans realized that the fate of slavery rested on the outcome of the war. On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, abolishing slavery in the states in rebellion against the United States—a decision that became a turning point in the nation's history. The combined actions of the President and thousands of ordinary men and women, black and white, enslaved and free, culminated in the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery throughout the United States in 1865. The amendment gave legal force to the principle argument of the Declaration of Independence: that all men are created equal.

For more information on this film, please visit: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/abolitionists/>

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Slavery by Another Name

(2012, 90 minutes)

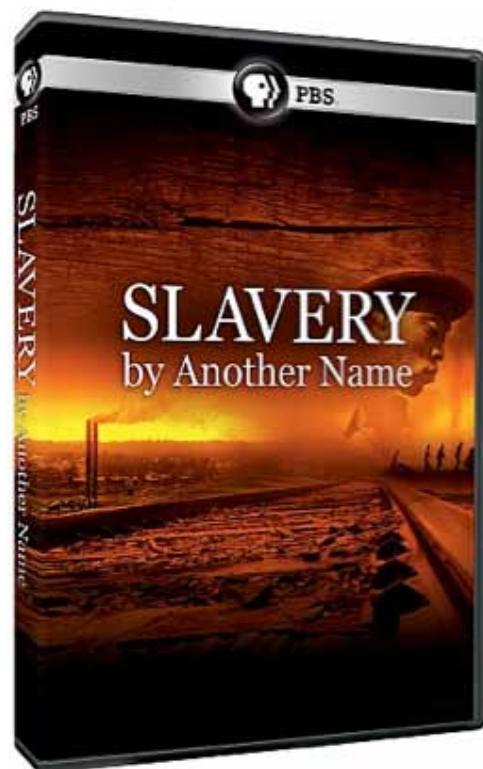
A production of TPT National Productions in association with Two Dollars & A Dream, Inc. Produced and directed by Sam Pollard. Executive Producer Catherine Allan. Co-Executive Producer Douglas A. Blackmon. Written by Sheila Curran Bernard. Edited by Jason Pollard. Narrated by Laurence Fishburne. Original Score by Michael Bacon. Chief Content Officer Terry O'Reilly. Executive in Charge of Production Gerry Richman.

It was a shocking reality that often went unacknowledged, then and now: a huge system of forced, unpaid labor, mostly affecting Southern black men, that lasted until World War II. Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning book by Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name* tells the stories of men, charged with crimes like vagrancy, and often guilty of nothing, who were bought and sold, abused, and subjected to sometimes deadly working conditions as unpaid convict labor. Interviews with the descendants of victims and perpetrators resonate with a modern audience. Christina Comer, who discovered how her family profited from the system, says that “the story is important no matter how painful the reality is.”

Historical Background

By 1865, despite the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation, the Thirteenth Amendment, and the Confederate defeat in the Civil War, many former slaves did not in reality experience “a new birth of freedom.” The Republican-controlled Congress enacted the Fourteenth Amendment (enshrining birthright citizenship and equal protection of the law) in 1868 and the Fifteenth Amendment (guaranteeing the right to vote for all men regardless of race) in 1870. However, states and communities across the South ignored these federal mandates by passing “black codes,” laws that served to essentially re-enslave African Americans. Local law enforcement officers cited regulations against vagrancy, loitering, or walking near railroads to arrest, incarcerate, and sentence African American men to work as forced convict laborers in factories and mines and on farms. Drawing public attention to some of the victims and perpetrators of this forced labor system, the film *Slavery by Another Name* presents a story that has been largely ignored in history books.

For more information on this film, please visit: <http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name>



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The Loving Story

(2011, 77 minutes)

An Augusta Films Production. Directed by Nancy Burski. Produced by Nancy Burski and Elisabeth Haviland James. Edited by Elisabeth Haviland James. Writers Nancy Burski and Susie Ruth Powell. Executive Producers Scott Berrie and Marshall Sonenshine. Co-Producer Patricia Romeu. Still Photography Grey Villet. Archival Footage by Hope Ryden. Cinematography by Rex Miller, Steve Milligan and Abbott Mills. Original Music David Majzun. Music Supervisor Susan Jacobs. A co-production of HBO Documentary Films. Distributed by Icarus Films.

Mildred and Richard Loving knew it was technically illegal for them to live as a married couple in Virginia because she was of African American and Native American descent and he was white. But they never expected to be woken up in their bedroom and arrested one night in 1958. The documentary brings to life the Lovings' marriage and the legal battle that followed through little-known filmed interviews and photographs shot for *Life* magazine.

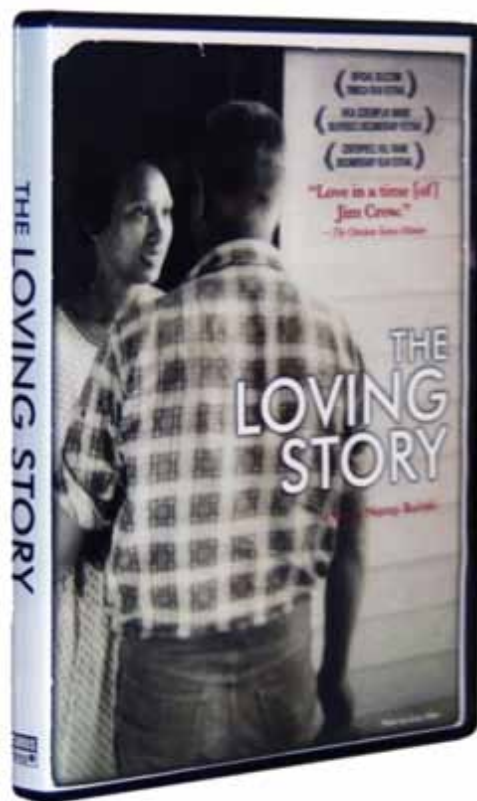
Historical Background

After World War II, civil rights activists built upon a mobilizing tradition within black communities that included sit-ins, strikes, and protest marches. Grassroots groups around the nation relied on non-violent tactics and multiple campaigns to end segregation. National organizations, among them the NAACP and ACLU, worked to end segregation by bringing cases before the Supreme Court and the federal government. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that public schooling was to be desegregated with "deliberate speed." Hopes were high that legalized discrimination could be ended and equal rights for African Americans won.

In many cases, the ultimate success of the major legal and political battles of the civil rights era rested on the action, courage, and persistence of individuals. Richard Loving and Mildred Jeter were two such individuals who changed history. In July 1958, they returned home after marrying in Washington, DC, and were arrested in the middle of the night. The Lovings had broken the Virginia Racial Integrity Act of 1924 forbidding interracial marriage. Faced with prison, the Lovings took a plea bargain that mandated they leave Virginia for 25 years. They moved to Washington, DC, but missed their home, family, and rural community. In 1963, Mildred Loving wrote a letter to Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who suggested that she contact the American Civil Liberties Union. Two young lawyers, Bernard Cohen and Philip Hirschkop, argued the case through state and federal courts. In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court heard *Loving v. Virginia*. The justices voted unanimously to strike down the Virginia law with Chief Justice Warren writing that "the freedom to marry has long been recognized as one of the vital personal rights essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men." The landmark ruling led to the overturning of miscegenation laws in fifteen states.

The film narrates the lives of Mildred and Richard Loving and their fight for the recognition of their marriage, all the way to the Supreme Court. The film's immediacy derives from the inclusion of footage dating from the 1960s depicting the daily life of the couple and their three children while they were in hiding in a house in Virginia.

For more information on this film, please visit: <http://lovingfilm.com/>



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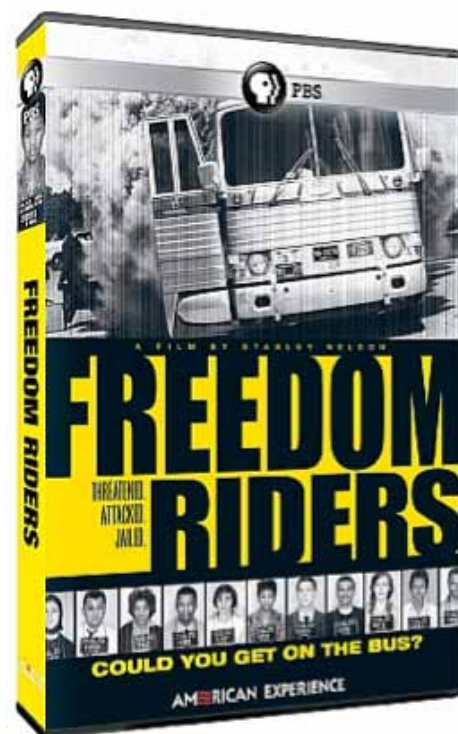
The Abolitionists ❖ Slavery by Another Name ❖ The Loving Story ❖ Freedom Riders

Freedom Riders

(2011, 120 minutes)

A Film by Stanley Nelson. A Firelight Media production for *American Experience*. Written, produced, and directed by Stanley Nelson. Produced by Laurens Grant. Editors Lewis Erskine and Al Jernon Tunsh. Original Concept Developed by Paul Taylor. Archival Producer Lewanne Jones. Associate Producer Stacey Holman. Director of Photography Robert Shepard. Composer Tom Phillips. Based in part on the book *Freedom Riders* by Raymond Arsenault. *American Experience* is a production of WGBH Boston. Senior Producer Sharon Grimberg. Executive Producer Mark Samels.

Attracting a diverse group of volunteers—black and white, young and old, male and female, secular and religious, northern and southern—the Freedom Rides of 1961 took the civil rights struggle out of the courtroom and onto the streets of the Jim Crow South. *Freedom Riders* tells the terrifying, moving, and suspenseful story of a time when white and black volunteers riding a bus into the Deep South risked being jailed, beaten, or killed, as white local and state authorities ignored or encouraged violent attacks. The film includes previously unseen amateur 8mm footage of the burning bus on which some *Freedom Riders* were temporarily trapped, taken by a local twelve-year-old and held as evidence since 1961 by the FBI.



Historical Background

In 1961, U.S. Supreme Court decisions that overturned racial segregation in interstate travel were largely ignored in the South. To challenge this status quo, more than 400 black and white Americans, called Freedom Riders, performed a simple act: they traveled into the segregated South in small interracial groups and sat where they pleased on interstate buses. The Freedom Rides began on May 4, 1961, with a group of thirteen Riders recruited and trained by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). By the summer, the Rides had evolved into a broad-based movement involving hundreds of activists from local, regional, and national civil rights organizations. Finally, on September 22, the Freedom Riders triumphed. The Interstate Commerce Commission issued a sweeping desegregation order. As of November 1, Jim Crow signs had to be removed from bus stations. Every interstate bus had to display a certificate: "Seating aboard this vehicle is without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin, by order of the Interstate Commerce Commission." The Freedom Rides led to further federal civil rights legislation and have become a model for grassroots movements to bring about social change.

The filmmaker, Stanley Nelson, creates a powerful and searing documentary by pairing archival footage with interviews. The videotaped interviews with some of the Riders transport viewers back to the events and horrors the Riders faced. Many endured savage beatings and imprisonment. Interviewees include: John Lewis, a college student who now serves as a member of Congress; Joan Trumpauer, then a nineteen-year-old secretary in Washington, DC, who spent months in Parchman State Penitentiary, the harshest prison in Mississippi; Jim Zwerg, a Wisconsin student on exchange at Fisk University, who was hospitalized after a mob beat him with bats and pipes in Montgomery, Alabama; Hank Thomas, a student at Howard University who became active in SNCC; Diane Nash, who had led successful non-violent student protest

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at Fisk University and monitored the progress of the Rides from Nashville, Tennessee, recruiting new Riders and speaking to the press; and John Seigenthaler, Attorney General Robert Kennedy's man on the ground, who recounts events from the perspective of the government and later became a victim of mob violence himself.

For more information on this film, please visit: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/freedomriders/>